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To: Representative Mr. Jay Obernolte [R-CA-8], Sponsor
From: Lorraine Minatoishi Ph.D., AIA
Hearing: N/A
Subject: **SUPPORT** to H.R.6434, Relating to House Committee on Natural Resources

Dear Representative Obernolte,

I am writing in **Support of H.R.6434** which directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish within the National Park Service, the "Japanese American World War II History Network".

I am an owner of an architectural and engineering firm in downtown Honolulu that specializes in historic preservation. I possess a Doctorate of Engineering and have completed extensive research on Japanese Americans throughout my academic studies and into my professional career. I have been an advocate for preserving our cultural heritage for over 20 years and through my research and professional work in this field, I have seen the positive impacts of preserving the history of Japanese Americans during World War II.

It is important to recognize Japanese American's experience during World War II as a part of our shared national heritage and national consciousness such as the longest used internment camp, Honouliuli.

The Honouliuli internment camp opened in 1943 and was the largest and longest-operating internment camp in Hawaii until it was closed in 1946. There were 17 known facilities that held internees across the Territory of Hawaii. The camp was hidden in a steep gulch in Kunia and was managed by the U.S. Army. Its location was considered ideal due to its close proximity to Schofield Barracks, as well as being situated remotely enough to keep the site hidden from the public. Internees recall severe dry and hot conditions with infestations of mosquitoes, thus earning Honouliuli its nickname "Hell Valley." Internees at Honouliuli were released following the news of Japan's surrender in 1945, and the POWs were released the following year. Vegetation quickly grew and took over the site years to follow and was left forgotten as the attention drew to victories celebrated at Pearl Harbor and beyond.

In 2002, volunteers from the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii and others revisited the site of Honouliuli to find overgrown vegetation nearly covering the whole site. Many archaeological findings including trenches, ditches, concrete slabs and footings were uncovered within the brush. Two (2) intact structures were also standing. Based on historical photos, maps, and documentation, the structures are believed to be a guard shack and a processing station. These volunteers worked tirelessly to bring awareness to this site for over 10 years.

On February 19, 2015, President Barack Obama announced the designation of Honouliuli National Monument. Honouliuli serves to remind every American about the critical importance of safeguarding civil liberties and maintaining our values during times of crisis. It is important to recognize Honouliuli and other Japanese American confinement sites as a part of our shared national heritage and national consciousness. It is a place to reflect on wartime experiences and recommit ourselves to the pursuit of freedom and justice.

In 2015, Minatoishi Palumbo Architects, Inc. (dba AEPAC) was brought onto the project to provide the expertise of Secretary of Interior Historic Architect § 36 CFR Part 61 to complete the Construction Documents including drawings and specifications for the project and submitted a final set of construction drawings to National Park Service on October 14, 2016.

The exhibit design and exhibit models were completed March 2016. AEPAC completed installation of the exhibit at Hawaii's Plantation Village in May 2017. This exhibit is a semi-permanent exhibit that opened May 28, 2017 and will remain as a part of Hawaii's Plantation Village. The exhibit was planned to open earlier, but due to lack of funding the opening postponed to May 2017.

In May of 2017, the interactive exhibit held at Hawaii's Plantation Village opened and continues to contribute to the education of the public, especially the younger generation, of a crucial piece of Hawaii's History and Japanese history that is often overlooked. The exhibit tells the story of the Honouliuli Internment camp through a series of educational posters that are spaced throughout a designed space that includes a processing tent, model airplane, authentic military equipment, laser cut site model, sleeping quarters, and watchtower. All the aspects of the exhibit are able to be interacted with offering a sensory exhibit that will help all visitors to learn on a more personal level the struggle and story that Japanese Americans faced during WWII.

With the combined effort of documenting and preservation planning for the historic Honouliuli Internment Camp site and the educational exhibit for the public, both the tangible and intangible history of the Honouliuli Internment Camp have been celebrated for years to come. Similarly, I feel it is vitally important to conduct research on Japanese Americans who have faced strong discrimination since World War II yet continue to thrive, contributing significantly to the culture, economy, and many other facets of our society.

By enacting H.R. 6434, more sites like Honouliuli will be included in or determined by the Secretary to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places; thus, furthering the study of Japanese Americans experience during World War II. The study will also be able to produce educational materials, interpretive guides and electronic information that will provide resourceful information to generations to come.

As a Japanese American, I believe passing this knowledge onto our children and grandchildren will not only help them understand the injustice Japanese Americans endured, but will be able to access the sites that their ancestors once occupied as they were during World War II. Thank you Mr. Obernolte for sponsoring this bill, I trust that we will see progression from the Senate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lorraine Minatoishi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lorraine Minatoishi, Ph.D., AIA